

### N.C.A.A. Plans Stricter Recruiting Standards

by LYNETTE CLEMETSON - The New York Times

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The N.C.A.A. is considering sweeping changes in recruiting practices that may include decreasing the length of campus visits, eliminating student-hosted off-campus entertainment and allowing only commercial, coach-fare transportation for recruits.

The proposals were laid out Thursday by David Berst, the N.C.A.A. vice president and chairman of its task force reviewing recruiting rules, during a Congressional hearing on concerns that lavish spending, alcohol and sex are being used to lure recruits to college sports programs.

"We do not intend to go through another recruiting season without new standards in place," Berst said.

Convened by a subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has oversight over college athletics, the hearing was prompted by more than a half-dozen allegations of sexual misconduct by football players and recruits at Colorado, and what Rep. Jan **Schakowsky**, Democrat of Illinois, called "a culture that persists throughout the nation that tolerates such violence against women."

But the scope of the proceedings cut across a wide array of National Collegiate Athletic Association programs and policies. Throughout the often confrontational session, members of Congress, along with academic and athletic officials, offered harsh criticism of practices that include providing private jets, alcohol and strippers to potential recruits.

Among the issues debated was whether Congress should even be making recommendations on N.C.A.A. guidelines.

"It's very important that Congress not try to get involved in N.C.A.A. legislation," said Rep. Tom Osborne, Republican of Nebraska and the former football coach at Nebraska. "It would be like having the Washington Redskins come in here and write tax policy. You just don't understand it. You have to be there to know what to do."

His testimony did not stop the members of the committee from leveling tough questions at witnesses.

"Why are you not ahead of the curve?" Rep. Cliff Stearns, Republican of Florida and the chairman of the subcommittee, asked Berst, saying that he viewed the N.C.A.A.'s proposals as reactive rather proactive. "It seems to me there is some culpability in the N.C.A.A.," he said.

"Why have you not been leading the charge?"

Dr. Elizabeth Hoffman, the president of the University of Colorado; Don McPherson, the former Syracuse quarterback and executive director of the Sports Leadership Institute at Adelphi University; and David Williams II, vice chancellor and general counsel at Vanderbilt, were among other officials who testified before the panel.

Saying that "sports has become a cancer in our culture," McPherson expressed support for legislative and legal review of abuses in college athletic programs.

"It's very important that when we talk about the laws of the land versus the laws that govern collegiate athletics or recruiting that the laws of the land take precedence," he said. "And that we recognize that when student athletes or students commit crimes against women, commit crimes against others on campus, that they be dealt with as crimes."

Last week, all but one member of the Colorado Congressional delegation signed a letter asking the committee to postpone the hearing because it might compromise existing investigations involving football players and recruits at Colorado.

Diana DeGette, Democrat of Colorado, who did not sign the letter and is a member of the subcommittee that convened the hearing, said before the session that it was "not intended to be a witch hunt of the University of Colorado or a review of the facts in the Colorado investigations."

Instead, she said during the hearing, the proceedings were called to "determine whether there are system problems" contributing to abuses that could be addressed through tougher regulations.

Even though the Colorado scandal was mentioned repeatedly, there was widespread praise of Hoffman, the Colorado president, for implementing stringent recruiting guidelines last week. These include many of the proposals being considered by the N.C.A.A.

"Our vision is to become a national leader for a culture of personal respect and responsibility in our football and athletic programs and throughout campus," Hoffman said.

Hoffman and several other panelists conceded that the university's changes, if not adopted by the entire N.C.A.A., would most likely put Colorado at a competitive disadvantage in recruiting top players.